

Dear Commissioners:

Stop hidden phone fees so I can truly compare prices of phone services. I support the petition filed by the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates and endorsed by other consumer advocacy organizations. CG Docket No. 04-208, Petition for Declaratory Ruling Regarding Truth-In-Billing and Billing Format, is long overdue.

Phone bills should be truthful and easy to understand. When people sign up for a phone plan, they are quoted a price. We figure that into our budget. Then, wham! we get nailed by all these additional confusing fees for stuff we didn't sign up for or account for. For those of us struggling to make ends meet, we don't have the ability to absorb for extra and unexpected fees. And we are deprived of the opportunity to make informed choices in advance, before signing contracts that we ultimately can't afford. How is this NOT bait and switch, and how can this be legal?

Because this practice is tolerated by the FCC, long distance and wireless phone companies are able to hide the true cost of service. These add-ons make the advertised price of service significantly less than the amount of the check I have to write each month to pay the bill. Competition will not work if consumers cannot accurately compare prices when shopping for service.

Many states are stepping up to address this problem. They should be allowed to proceed. However, the FCC shouldn't shirk its responsibility, nor limit states from doing more.

The FCC should immediately grant the NASUCA petition to investigate billing practices, and prohibit phone and wireless companies from imposing separate monthly fees, line items or surcharges unless expressly mandated by law or the charge is expressly authorized by a governmental authority.